

September 2010

DRAFT: Doctor of Nursing Practice Washington State University Spokane/Vancouver

Introduction and Overview

Washington State University (WSU) seeks approval to establish a Doctor of Nursing Practice (DNP) degree program in the College of Nursing, administered at the Spokane and Vancouver campuses but with classes accessible at the Tri-Cities campus and through WSU online. The program would be 20 percent campus-based and 80 percent online and interactive television instruction.

The proposed program would replace the existing Master's in Family and Psychiatric/Mental Health Nurse Practitioner tracks. The change is needed to meet the requirements of a mandate initiated in 2004 by the program's accrediting body, the American Association of Colleges of Nursing (AACN), that all advance practice nurses be educated at the DNP level by 2015. Failure to make this change would render the existing master's programs obsolete. WSU would retain the existing Master's in Nursing in Advanced Population Health track which would lead toward a Clinical Nurse Specialist credential, or with an additional year of coursework, a DNP.

The DNP differs from other nursing doctorate degrees (PhD, DNS, DNSc) in that it prepares students primarily for the highest level of practice rather than for research and scholarship. The orientation is toward improving outcomes of care rather than toward the development of new knowledge.

The new program would take three years for BSN graduates to complete, emphasizing conceptual and critical thinking, and engaging students in practice inquiry and the application of research into practice. It also would prepare graduates to serve as clinical faculty in both undergraduate and graduate programs. The program transition would be supported with resources reallocated from the existing Master's in Nursing tracks (scheduled to be discontinued) and would not require additional infrastructure or state support.

Relationship to Institutional Role and Mission

The DNP would help the WSU College of Nursing achieve its goal of preparing graduates with competencies in practice, inquiry, leadership, and education. Advanced nurse practitioners are critical to efforts to improve health outcomes and provide health services to diverse underserved and rural communities throughout the state. Many of WSU's peer institutions (University of Washington, Oregon Health and Science University, University of Portland, University of Utah, Arizona State University, and the University of Arizona) already have launched their DNP programs and are enrolling students, ahead of the AACN mandate.

Diversity

In 2009-10, 22 percent of WSU's graduate nursing enrollment were students from underrepresented groups. Fourteen percent were male. WSU has also hosted a summer institute for Native American high school students for the last ten years to introduce them to health occupations, and the University has a full-time Native American recruitment and retention coordinator on staff. Plans for recruiting and retaining underrepresented students into the DNP program include establishing articulation agreements with tribal colleges and community colleges, hiring of peer recruiters, securing funding for scholarships, and partnering with minority nurse associations.

Program Need

The proposal makes a thorough assessment of employer and student demand for the DNP program. WSU cites the HECB *State and Regional Needs Assessment* as identifying nursing as a high employer demand occupation, noting that the average age of nurse practitioners is 50 and nearly one-quarter are over 55 years old. Some DNP graduates may eventually become nursing faculty in DNP and other nursing programs, addressing the critical national shortage of nursing faculty. As health care reform and associated cost control strategies are developed and implemented, demand for advanced practice nurses is likely to increase further to provide high quality, cost effective care in lieu of other medical professionals. WSU also anticipates that DNP graduates will serve as policy change agents and leaders to improve population health outcomes. They will also serve as educators and health information technologists especially in rural and underserved areas.

WSU conducted focus groups in Spokane, Vancouver, and Tri-Cities that included nurse executives, middle managers, and strategic planners from hospitals and community agencies, as well as master's program alumni. They also surveyed nearly 200 students and alumni. Sixty-four percent of survey respondents were aware of the AACN mandate regarding advanced practice nurses. Seventy-two percent stated they would be interested in enrolling in a DNP

program in the next 2-10 years. Those who did not indicate an interest typically mentioned their age or a lack of time and money. Focus group participants and survey respondents identified factors that would motivate enrollment, including flexible course scheduling and a preference for hybrid courses, tuition reimbursement, and a job market that required the DNP.

Program Description

The DNP program will be administered at WSU Spokane and Vancouver and courses will also be offered at WSU Tri-Cities. It is a mostly online/distance learning program with just 20 percent of courses being classroom-based.

The existing master's-level programs will serve as the foundation for the DNP program with two entry options: post-BSN to DNP and post-Master's (MN) to DNP. The post-BSN to DNP program is basically a three-year program, with the first two years comprised of the existing master's tracks and the final three semesters covering the DNP core curriculum. Part-time students will take five years or longer. DNP core courses in the final three semesters include Translating Evidence into Advanced Practice; Rural, Cultural, and Global Competencies for Population Health; Information Management for Nursing Practice; Organizational Systems and Leadership; and credits for a practicum and capstone project.

Post-MN to DNP students will receive credits for their master's degrees and then take the final three semesters of the DNP core curriculum. Part-time students will take five semesters or longer.

The plan is to begin decreasing master's FTE in Fall 2012 while incrementally increasing post-BSN to DNP FTE each year. Total graduate FTE will remain at about 140 throughout the transition as master's FTE decreases from 140 to 55 FTE by Fall 2015 and DNP FTE increases from zero to 81 FTE. There are no plans to increase faculty FTE as a result of the transition. DNP program admission will initially occur only in the fall. At full program implementation beginning Fall 2015, there will be an estimated 160 DNP students (four cohorts of 40 students) and 66 master's students (two cohorts of 33 students) in the College of Nursing during Fall semesters.

Program Costs

The program is funded by an internal reallocation of existing state FTE funding and institutional resources from the current Master's in Nursing tracks, which will be discontinued, with no request for additional state funding. The reallocation will have no adverse impact on other programs or departments. The staffing plan at full implementation includes a Senior Associate Dean (10 percent), Associate Dean of Graduate Programs (50 percent), a Regional Director (30 percent), and 2.5 FTE support staff. Faculty will be reallocated from the current master's program and

other programs in the College of Nursing. By full enrollment in 2015, the program will cost an estimated \$2.8 million, or \$19,600 per FTE (somewhat higher than the *2005-06 Cost Study* average total cost per AAFTE figure for WSU Pullman/Spokane graduate-level health programs of \$17,141). Tuition revenues are estimated at \$929,000 by 2015.

External Review and Comments

The program was reviewed by two external reviewers. Dr. Mary Wright, associate professor and graduate faculty member at North Dakota State University, offered a largely positive and supportive review of the proposal. She thought the program would produce well-trained professionals based on the quality of the curriculum, faculty, learning experiences, and resources identified in the proposal. She thought the curriculum was responsive to the needs of external constituents and program applicants, consistent with trends in the field, and responsive to an overwhelming and growing demand for DNP-trained professionals.

Nancy Woods, professor and past-dean of the UW School of Nursing, was also supportive but identified several concerns:

- Lack of clarity on how the program will train nurse educators given its emphasis on nursing practice rather than nursing research and nurse education.
- The extent to which WSU is anticipating in future licensure changes, which could result in an influx of demand for the DNP and make continuation of any master's program (as is proposed with regard to Advanced Population Health) obsolete.
- The need for faculty support for the DNP, which may raise issues regarding new faculty recruitment to support the program and incentives to help existing WSU faculty earn a DNP degree.
- Financial sustainability of the DNP program after state budget cuts. UW is moving its DNP and other clinically-focused master's programs to self-support status under UW Educational Outreach.

WSU responded to these concerns by noting that the DNP anticipates a nurse educator advanced pathway to prepare nurses to serve as faculty. WSU also noted that it is proposing to phase into the post-MN to DNP option once the post-BSN program is up and running and will make adjustments to accommodate growing demand as resources allow. WSU has decided against a self-support model in order to deliver the program at a more reasonable cost for Washington residents.

Staff Analysis

The proposed program would support the goals of the WSU College of Nursing and benefits the state and region. The proposal makes a compelling case for transitioning the existing programs from the master's to the doctoral level. Failure to do so would jeopardize continued program accreditation and potentially licensure down the road.

WSU has submitted a thoroughly documented proposal with a well-developed plan for transitioning the program. Doing so will impose no additional costs on the state and the program will continue to be state supported.

A key limitation that needs to be addressed by the HECB and Legislature is a current statutory provision that limits doctoral programs at the branches. In order for WSU to offer the program at the Vancouver Campus, that prohibition would need to be lifted. The authorizing legislation for the branches invites campuses, in consultation with the HECB, to “propose legislation to authorize practice-oriented or professional doctoral programs if: (a) unique research facilities and equipment are located near the campus or (b) the campus can clearly demonstrate student and employer demand in the region that is linked to regional economic development.” The evidence presented in the proposal clearly supports the institution’s request, based on student and employer demand linked to regional economic development. Health care is a key industry in the Vancouver/Portland metro area and the shortage of well-qualified nurses, nurse practitioners, and nurse educators is a critical concern in the region and across the northwest states.

Staff Recommendation

After review of the proposal and supporting materials, staff recommended HECB approval of the WSU Doctor of Nursing Practice program with the condition that approval in Vancouver is contingent upon a change in statutory authority that would allow students to access doctoral-level programs at branch campuses. Further, staff recommended that the Board support an agency request for legislation that would allow the research universities to extend doctoral programs to their branch campuses. The Higher Education Coordinating Board’s Education Committee discussed the proposal during its August 25, 2010 meeting and also recommended approval of the program by the full Board.

RESOLUTION 10-23

WHEREAS, Washington State University (WSU) proposes to replace their existing Master's in Nursing program with a new Doctor of Nursing Practice degree program beginning in 2012; and

WHEREAS, The new program would respond to a mandate by the accrediting body, the American Association of Colleges of Nursing, requiring a doctoral degree for entry into advanced practice nursing by 2015; and

WHEREAS, WSU has documented the continuing and increasing demand for advanced practice nurses and their ability to provide quality, cost-effective care and extend health services to underserved populations and areas; and

WHEREAS, The program would be offered at the Spokane, Vancouver, and Tri Cities campuses and would utilize a classroom/distance learning hybrid mode of instruction, consistent with student demand; and

WHEREAS, The program has support from external reviewers; and

WHEREAS, The program change would follow the lead of several peer institutions in the area and in the United States; and

WHEREAS, The program would be supported with resources reallocated from within the College of Nursing, and would not require additional infrastructure or state support; and

WHEREAS, The Higher Education Coordinating Board recognizes that under current statute, WSU would not be able to offer the Doctor of Nursing Practice program at a branch campus;

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, that the Higher Education Coordinating Board approves the Doctor of Nursing practice at Washington State University, effective September 16, 2010, with approval at Vancouver, contingent upon a change in statutory authority that would allow students to access doctor level programs at branch campuses.

Adopted: September 16, 2010

Attest:

Jesús Hernandez, Chair

Roberta Greene, Secretary